



**For Immediate Release:**  
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## **News Release**

### **Teens Honored for Efforts to Prevent Dating Violence**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) recognized several Utah teens for their efforts to bring attention to dating violence during a ceremony at the State Capitol Rotunda. The students participated in a multimedia art contest as part of Utah’s 2011 Teen Dating Violence Prevention Week, which is being observed February 6-12.

Sara Elliot, a survivor of a violent relationship, urged attendees to take dating violence seriously. “My life is very different now. I have a hard time going to school. I hope that other girls do not have to go through this.”

While many people think of dating violence as physical abuse, it includes verbal and emotional abuse as well.

Data from the 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a national survey conducted every two years in public high schools throughout Utah, show that nearly 11% of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders said they were hit, slapped, or physically hurt on purpose by their boyfriend or girlfriend. A higher percentage of male students (12.5%) reported they had been in a violent dating relationship compared to female students (8.9%).

Veronica Tann, a student from West Lake Junior High School in West Valley City, was given an honorable mention award at the ceremony for her entry. When asked what message she wanted to portray with her artwork she said, “I wanted this to represent a victim’s heart. It has a bandage on it which means that the person is hurt, but may not be heartbroken. I hope dating abuse can stop.”

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The contest invited 7th-12th grade students from across Utah to create a visual art project, YouTube video, or written work that educates teens about dating violence. Grand prize winners were:

- Bree Crookston, Davis High, Kaysville, Visual Arts Category
- Billy Johnson, Valley Junior High School, West Valley City, YouTube Video Category
- Hannah Wills, Valley Junior High School, West Valley City, Written Works Category

Each winner received a plaque and a visual arts, film production, or writing class valued at \$190-\$300 from the Visual Arts Institute, Spy Hop Productions, and Higher Ground Learning Center.

In addition, Linda Nowlin, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher from Valley Junior High School, received an award for encouraging her students to write essays on dating violence prevention and submit them to the contest. Kearns High School was also recognized for planning a week of activities educating students about healthy dating.

The winning entries can be viewed at

<http://health.utah.gov/vipp/datingviolence/awarenessweek.html>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*